



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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For Immediate Release: February 28, 2008

08-25

DOH URGES HAWAII RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR ELEVATED VOG LEVELS ON BIG ISLAND

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) is urging Hawai'i island residents to take precautionary measures due to elevated vog levels. Higher than normal levels of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) in the air around Hilo and Pahala were detected this week by DOH vog monitors. While elevated, the SO₂ levels are within federal and state ambient air quality limits. Some areas may experience higher vog levels than others, because of wind direction and weather conditions. The DOH monitors volcanic haze or vog levels in five big island communities: Kona, Hilo, Mountain View, Pahala, and Paho.

Communities near the Kilauea volcano can be particularly affected by increased levels of SO₂ caused by recent volcanic activity. In addition, light southerly (Kona) winds to the islands have created heavier vog conditions especially on the Island of Hawai'i. When typical trade winds are replaced with southeasterly winds for prolonged periods vog may travel from the Island of Hawai'i to other major islands such as Maui, Oahu, and Kauai. Current weather conditions have created vog on Oahu.

Elevated levels of SO₂ can cause breathing problems in individuals especially those with pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. If you have respiratory conditions and live or work in an area impacted by vog consider taking precautionary measures. The following are general recommendations from the American Lung Association:

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- Stay indoors and use an air conditioner, if available.
- Do not smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Limit physical exertion.
- Drink plenty of fluids to loosen mucus. Warm beverages seem to work best.
- If you take medications, make sure you have an adequate supply and keep them readily available in a convenient place.
- Contact your physician as soon as any respiratory problem develops.

While these recommendations are intended primarily for persons having respiratory or chronic lung disease, they are also useful for healthy persons during vog episodes.

Real-time air quality data received by air monitors located statewide are available on the DOH website at <http://Hawaii.gov/doh/air-quality/index.html>, or contact the Hawai'i State Department of Health Clean Air Branch at (808) 586-4200 for further information on air quality.

For more information on health effects caused by vog, please visit the American Lung Association website at www.ala-hawaii.org.

The U.S. National Park Service has posted information on the SO₂ levels at the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park on their website, <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/air/WebCams/parks/havoso2alert/havoalert.cfm>

To obtain additional information on respiratory health, contact your personal physician or the American Lung Association of Hawai'i at (808) 537-5966.

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